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"HISTORY OF BELFOUNTAIN PARK"

"BELFOUNTAIN PARK"

In the early 1900's where the Park now is located, was just a wild unkempt place with a saw mill located on the Credit River.

Following is a copy of research done by the late Mrs. M. A. Morris on the Park and the Credit River: -

Belfountain Park is one of the units of the Credit River which under the Credit Valley Conservation Authority, established in 1954 by the Provincial Government to be guardian of the river, provides parks for recreational purposes. Belfountain Park is, no doubt, the gem of these beauty spots - a place of towering wooded cliffs and rippling river in a tunnel of green leaves.

As it is part of the Credit River, let us for a moment consider that river. It has its beginning in a cedar swamp in the hills of Mono Township (Dufferin County) 2-1/2 miles north-east of Orangeville and ends as it reaches the shores of Lake Ontario at Port Credit. How did the Credit River get it's name?

On some early maps it appears as the Ononront and the Mississauga Indians may have called it Chinguacousy, meaning a place of pine trees. In 1757, a map prepared by Boucher de la Brocque, a Frech naval officer serving on Lake Ontario, bore the name Riviere-au-Credit indicating that here was a trading place between the French and Indians. In 1776 the surveyor Augustus Jones wrote the name of Mes-sin-ni-ka which translated from the Mississauga tongue as meaning Trusting River, a place where Credit was given for trade goods.

It was known as the Credit to John Graves Simcoe, first governor of Upper Canada. When Simcoe, his wife and daughter Sophia sailed from Niagara to Newborn "York" in June, 1796, Mrs. Simcoe wrote in her diary "We landed at 3 o'clock at the river Credit, 12 miles from York. After dinner we walked by the river. Numbers of Indian resort here at this season to fish for salmon and the Governor, wishing to go some way up it made signs to some Indians to take us into their canoe.

They carried us about three miles when we came to rapids and went on shore. The banks were high on one side, covered with pine and on the other side a pretty piece of rocky country". The place where the Simcoes went ashore would be near Dundas Street.

Belfountain Park as it is today, is a beautiful spot made possible by the vision and hard work of Mr. C. W. Mack, a Toronto manufacturer who acquired the land and built a summer home there about 1909. Mr. Mack spent a fortune developing the Park. He had a stairway hewn out of rock leading to a cave he made made in the walls of the gorge. He built a house for himself and a smaller cottage on the face of the hill nearby. This he called "Bide-A-Wee". Every summer he brought young women out from the hot city and gave them a two week holiday. After two weeks, a different lot would come. Thus it was that many young women got a holiday in the country that would have had to stay in the city. This house is now our museum.

He also built a dam and a spidery bridge of wooden slats across the gorge below the dam. This was held by wire cables. For years it was one of the swinging sensations at Belfountain. He graciously allowed the public to visit this beauty spot - with certain reservations on grounds and pets. There must be thousands of people to-day remember visiting this lovely spot.

On Mr. Mack's death, the park went into other hands and exchanged owners several times. Finally the Credit Valley Authority bought it for $23,800.00 with help of a provincial grant. Since that time they have made certain renovations namely: -

1. Clearing the western bank and locating picnic tables in the area.
2. A second parking lot.
3. The dam rebuilt and faced with stone.
4. The fountain restored.
5. The Museum opened in 1964.
6. The swinging bridge rebuilt.